Notes from the division.....

This edition of the newsletter includes brief updates from ACOTE and a profile on Dr. Heather Stagliano who has joined the staff as the new Director of Accreditation (p. 2-3).

ACOTE’s next meeting will be in Denver in August. The Council has a busy agenda. In addition to a number of program actions, the Council will be completing its annual program evaluation and strategic planning sessions. At this time, the Council will be reviewing the recommendation from the spring Representative Assembly meeting to consider accreditation of post-professional programs majoring in occupational therapy.

The fall joint meeting of the Academic Leadership Councils and the Academic Fieldwork Coordinators in New Orleans in October (p. 6) will focus on the issues relating to entry-level degrees for occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants.

The agenda includes presentations from members of the AOTA Board of Directors on the position statement released in April on the OT entry-level degree (p. 4). We will also have a report from the Representative Assembly Ad Hoc committee charged to investigate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of changing the occupational therapy assistant entry-level degree from the current associate degree to either 1) include both the associate degree and bachelor’s degree as options for OTA education, or 2) elevate the entry-level degree exclusively to the bachelor’s degree.

The meeting will provide an opportunity for facilitated dialogue on the issues and for feedback from members. It is important that you take this opportunity to participate in this important discussion that will impact the future entry-level degrees for the profession.

Outside of the meeting, we will be working on web-based formats to further foster an active dialogue. More information will be provided in the fall newsletter.

Thank you again for all you do for the profession and I look forward to seeing you in New Orleans this October.

Neil Harvison, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
Chief Officer, Academic and Scientific Affairs
New Director of Accreditation

The American Occupational Therapy Association is pleased to announce that Heather Stagliano, DHSc, OTR/L has been appointed as the new Director of Accreditation at AOTA effective June 30, 2014. Dr. Stagliano will be replacing Dr. Neil Harvison who was promoted to the role of Chief Academic and Scientific Affairs Officer at the Association.

Dr. Stagliano has over 18 years experience in the field of occupational therapy and was most recently working in clinical practice on the polytrauma unit at the Department of Veterans Affairs, Palo Alto Health Care System, Palo Alto, California. Dr. Stagliano gained her bachelor’s degree in occupational therapy and master of health science degree from the University of Florida. In addition, she has an earned doctorate in health science from Nova Southeastern University.

Dr. Stagliano has been serving as member of the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) and on the Roster of Accreditation Evaluators (RAE) since 2010. In addition to her clinical practice, Dr. Stagliano served as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Florida from 2007-2010.

Contact Information: hstagliano@aota.org 301-652-6611, x2911

Interpretive Guide Change for Standard C.1.2

At the April 2014 meeting, the Council added an interpretative guideline for Standard C.1.2: Document the criteria and process for selecting fieldwork sites, to include maintaining memoranda of understanding, complying with all site requirements, maintaining site objectives and site data, and communicating this information to students. In addition to documenting, the guideline makes it clear that timely implementation of the criteria is required for compliance.

Further questions: accred@aota.org

OTA Entry-Level Degree Ad Hoc

The Representative Assembly (RA) charged the committee to investigate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of changing the occupational therapy assistant entry-level degree from the current associate degree to either 1) include both the associate degree and bachelor’s degree as options for OTA education, or 2) elevate the entry-level degree exclusively to the bachelor’s degree. The Committee is working on its final report that will be submitted to RA.

The Committee will be presenting a summary of its work at the joint meetings of the Academic Leadership Councils and Academic Fieldwork Forums in New Orleans this October.

See page 6 for meeting information.
As part of ACOTE’s outcomes program, the Council has been asking reviewers for qualitative feedback on the new E-Accreditation system. One theme that emerged from analysis of the data was that programs are stating that they are in compliance in the narrative section of the self-study, but not providing any evidence of compliance.

**For example:**

*Standard A.2.1: The program must identify an individual as the program director who is assigned to the occupational therapy educational program on a full-time basis. The director may be assigned other institutional duties that do not interfere with the management and administration of the program. The institution must document that the program director has sufficient release time to ensure that the needs of the program are being met.*

When addressing this Standard in the self-study, programs are stating in the narrative section that “the program director has sufficient release time to meet additional duties” or that “the program directors has a reduced teaching load of 25% to meet additional duties”. No other evidence is provided in the additional materials section of the Standard.

In order to establish compliance, the reviewers require evidence beyond a statement that the program is in compliance. The program must submit evidence that the release time for teaching is sufficient to meet the additional assigned duties.

This evidence will vary to reflect the context of the institution. In addition to stating the release time, the evidence could include the following examples:

- Additional staff resources (e.g. associate director with release time; support staff) to assist with the assigned additional duties of the program director.

- Evidence that the release time is sufficient to meet all of the additional duties (e.g., how you are assessing that all of the duties can be achieved in the release time provided).

- An explanation of the rationale used to determine the release time.

Questions? E-mail accred@aota.org

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**The AOTA Self-Study Preparation Workshop**

The AOTA Self-Study Preparation Workshop is designed to meet the needs of program directors and faculty preparing for an upcoming self-study review and new program directors wanting to understand more about the accreditation process. The workshop includes didactic instruction and interactive sessions with a mock review of sample self-study materials.

Attendance is limited to 30 participants.

**Next Workshop:**

October 21-22, 2014

Sheraton New Orleans Hotel ~ New Orleans, LA

Registration opens July 22, 2014. Contact vnjorge@aota.org for details.
AOTA BOD Issues Position Statement on Doctoral-Level Single Point of Entry for Occupational Therapists

One of the responsibilities of AOTA’s Board of Directors is to ensure that the Association’s strategic priorities support the Centennial Vision so that occupational therapy remains a valued profession. Doing so involves long-term vision and planning, and engaging members of the Association in dialogue around important issues.

In April of this year, the Board issued a position statement to articulate their view that future occupational therapists will need to be doctorally prepared for entry-level practice by 2025.

AOTA President Ginny Stoffel, PhD, OT, BCMH, FAOTA, says the board arrived at its view after receiving the recommendations of two separate advisory groups. The Future of Education Ad Hoc committee was created to examine and recommend strategies for the future of occupational therapy education, and a subgroup of the Board was asked to specifically consider a single point of entry at the doctoral level, based on the work of the ad hoc committee. The position statement is the result of the recommendations of these advisory groups, and many months of the board evaluating changes in the health care system, higher education, and the profession itself.

“As a board, we need to take the long view to ensure that occupational therapy remains competitive and relevant,” said Stoffel. “The changing health care system is requiring more dependence on research and evidence, and many similar professions are going to an entry-level doctorate. We want to begin a profession-wide dialogue on how to ensure that the profession remains not just relevant but in demand, despite changes and uncertainty.”

Stoffel emphasized what the position statement means. “This document reflects the board’s view of the future of the profession,” she said. “However, the board does not have the authority to implement this recommendation. Our role here is to frame for the profession what we consider to be a critical, strategic issue and facilitate a broad-based discussion with all our communities of interest so that an informed decision can take place.”

In coming to its conclusion to recommend that the profession move to the doctoral entry for occupational therapists by 2025, the Board of Directors examined multiple issues. The decision is a complex one and there are many advantages (pros) and potential disadvantages (cons) to this change. This table is a summary of the pros and cons identified by the board, and it includes feedback obtained by members and others. Additional advantages and/or disadvantages may be identified as the profession participates in dialogue about this complex issue.

In response to the changing demands of higher education, the health care environment, and within occupational therapy, it is the position of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Board of Directors that the profession should take action to transition toward a doctoral-level single point of entry for occupational therapists, with a target date of 2025. Support of high quality entry-level doctoral education for occupational therapists will benefit the profession, consumers, and society. The Board encourages a profession-wide dialogue on this critical issue. April 30, 2014.

See full rationale at: http://www.aota.org/AboutAOTA/GetInvolved/BOD/OTDStatement.aspx
Roles and responsibilities on entry-level degree

It is important to understand the roles and responsibilities of each leadership body in entry-level education. The following functions are derived from the AOTA Bylaws:

AOTA Board of Directors: governs the affairs and determines strategic direction of the Association.

Representative Assembly: designated body responsible for the establishment of AOTA professional standards and policies

ACOTE: establishes, approves, and administers educational standards to evaluate occupational therapy and occupational therapy assistant educational programs.

What does the Board’s position statement mean?

After careful consideration of the issues, the Board of Directors published a position statement with a vision for the future of the entry-level degree for the practice of occupational therapy in the United States. In doing so, the Board of Directors encouraged “a profession-wide dialogue on this critical issue”.

It is important to remember that this statement is not a MANDATE and that the Board of Directors does not have the regulatory authority to mandate the entry-level degree.

ACOTE, through the accreditation standards, is the only agency that has the authority to mandate the entry-level degree requirement. As required though USDE regulations, the changes in Standards must include a thorough review of the training needs of students and opportunity for agency’s relevant constituencies in the review and affords them a meaningful opportunity to provide input into the review.

ACOTE will not be making any move towards a mandate without hearing from and carefully considering input from all constituencies. It is important that you and your faculty participate in this important dialogue being proposed by the Board of Directors.

§602.21 Review of standards.
(a) The agency must maintain a systematic program of review that demonstrates that its standards are adequate to evaluate the quality of the education or training provided by the institutions and programs it accredits and relevant to the educational or training needs of students.

(b) The agency determines the specific procedures it follows in evaluating its standards, but the agency must ensure that its program of review --

(1) Is comprehensive;

(2) Occurs at regular, yet reasonable, intervals or on an ongoing basis;

(3) Examines each of the agency’s standards and the standards as a whole; and

(4) Involves all of the agency’s relevant constituencies in the review and affords them a meaningful opportunity to provide input into the review.
Number of Programs

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Totals

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1 Candidate Programs have proceeded to the second step and can admit students, but will not gain accreditation until successful completion of a report of self-study and on-site visit.

2 Applicant Programs have submitted a letter of intent to start a new program or additional location.

Joint Meeting of the Academic Leadership Councils and the Academic Fieldwork Forum:

Date: October 23-24, 2014
Location: Sheraton New Orleans
Room Rate: $189 single/ double

Overlooking the French Quarter and the Mississippi River the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel completed a $50 million renovation in May 2013! All guest rooms have been completely remodeled as well as the lobby and the majority of the meeting space!


Note: This year’s meeting will be on a Thursday & Friday to take advantage of a much lower room rate.
Staff Contacts:

Neil Harvison, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA  
Chief Academic and Scientific Affairs Officer  
E-mail: nharvison@aota.org  
Phone: 301-652-6611, x2202

Sue Graves  
Assistant Director of Accreditation  
E-mail: sgraves@aota.org  
Phone: 301-652-6611, x2912

Angelica Grigsby  
Accreditation Program Manager  
E-mail: agrigsby@aota.org  
Phone: 301-652-6611, x2915

Susan Lin, ScD, OTR/L  
Director of Research  
E-mail: slin@aota.org  
Phone: 301-652-6611, x2091

Valeta Njoroge  
Education Operations Coordinator  
E-mail: vnjoroge@aota.org  
Phone: 301-652-6611, x2932

Heather Stagliano, DHSc, OTR/L  
Director of Accreditation  
E-Mail: hstagliano@aota.org  
Phone: 301-652-6611, x2911

Deborah Yi  
On-site Program Coordinator  
E-mail: dyi@aota.org  
Phone: 301-652-6611, x2914

AOTA’s NBCOT® Exam Prep

AOTA’s online NBCOT® Exam Prep program is the most comprehensive and effective way for new occupational therapy practitioners to get ready for the biggest test of their career—at their own pace, any time and any place. Developed and reviewed by top occupational therapy leaders and educators across all practice areas, Exam Prep includes hundreds of self-assessment questions and vital tools to help students and new graduates focus on the topics they’ll need to master. Subscriptions include access for 1 year from the date of purchase. For more information and to order, visit: http://nbcotexamprep.aota.org.
OTCAS will launch its 5th application cycle on July 17, 2014. Program participation has significantly grown over the past two years, with 60% of all eligible graduate programs choosing to utilize the service.

By joining OTCAS, your occupational therapy program will become part of a national platform for promotion and visibility, data collection and management, and the sharing of best practices. OTCAS is administered through a partnership between the AOTA and Liaison International, the leader in centralized application services (CASTM) for the health professions.

Is your office understaffed?
Are you overwhelmed with the amount of paper documents you receive during the application cycle?
Do you have limited resources to manage your growing applicant pool?
Are you having difficulty filling seats reserved for out-of-state applicants?

OTCAS can help! The service offers:

• Attractive, modern, online applications for prospective students
• Exposure to a broader national spectrum of applicants
• A platform to cultivate and recruit applicants as soon as an OTCAS account is created
• CRM tools that enable targeted communications and messaging to in-progress applicants
• Access to secure, Web-based admissions software to make admissions decisions
• Rich database allows for comparative data on GPAs, test scores, demographic information, and other academic criteria
• Analytic platform supports automatic ranking and scoring of applicants based on customizable criteria
• Ideal platform for sharing best practices
• Decrease in administrative burdens enabled by integrated service model, in which transcripts are received, individual and aggregate GPAs are calculated, application documents are scanned, and support is provided to applicants via telephone, email, and social media

OTCAS is a service of AOTA and available free of charge to admissions teams managing Master's and Doctoral degree programs. Complimentary trainings can be scheduled at your convenience, as the OTCAS staff carefully tailors an onboarding experience to meet the needs of your unique program.

There is still time to join your colleagues who are preparing to utilize the service for the July 17 launch! Eligible programs can sign on to participate in OTCAS at any time.

For more information please click here or contact Jessica Scott at jsalefski@liaison-intl.com.